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Richardson Says South Leads In School Desegregation

WASHINGTON (UPI) —The Nixon administration said Thursday that the South is now ahead of the rest of the country in school desegregation, and promised stepped-up efforts to end racial isolation in schools of the North.

The statement was made by the Health, Education and Welfare Department, which said Southern progress on desegregation since the Nixon administration took office has been "dramatic and unprecedented."

HEW Secretary Elliot L. Richardson said racial isolation in northern schools is "evidently a serious and difficult problem." He said the administration would increase its review of northern school system records to try to pinpoint cases of officially sanctioned segregation and would encourage desegregation.

The HEW statement on desegregation was based on a survey made last fall by its Civil Rights Office, comparing 1970 with 1968 figures. The survey covered 11 Southern and 32 Northern and Western states.

It showed that the percentage of southern blacks attending all-black schools dropped from 68 to 18.4 per cent, while the percentage attending majority white schools jumped from 18.4 to 38.1 per cent. Southern blacks in schools with more than four-fifths black enrollment accounted for 41.7 per cent, and another 1.8 per cent were in schools with less than

four-fifths black enrollment.

In the Northern and Western schools, 11.9 per cent of blacks were in all-black schools in 1970 and 12.3 per cent in 1968. The figures showed 27.7 per cent in majority white schools, 57.4 per cent in schools with more than four-fifths black enrollment and 3 per cent in schools with less than four-fifths black enrollment.

Although these statistics showed that the South still has a higher percentage of blacks in all-black schools than do schools of the North and West, HEW officials said the significant figure was the total in all-black and nearly all-black schools—60.1 per cent in the South, 69.3 per cent elsewhere.

"The improved picture nationwide is largely attributable to strides made in the South in the past two years, where desegregation is now more extensive than in other regions," said Richardson.

Richardson showed a rare burst of temper when he was questioned sharply about the figures at a news conference.

"I really can't understand what appears to be an attempt to put me on the defensive about this data," he told one newsman. "We're not claiming anything in these figures. They are only declarative of the facts."

Last July, Attorney General John N. Mitchell forecast that 95 per cent of Southern black children who had been attending schools segregated by state laws would be desegregated by

the fall term. However, he said there still would be segregation based on neighborhood housing patterns, as there is elsewhere in the country.

The HEW figures indicated that 81.6 per cent of Southern blacks were in schools racially mixed to one degree or another, but did not show to what extent remaining segregation was due to law or housing patterns.

Richardson said all Southern school problems had not been wiped away and one major remaining problem was the firing and demotion of black teachers when desegregation occurs.

"It would be tragic and ironic if these teachers became the major victims of the integration effort," he said. HEW, he said, has notified schools nationwide that it will cut off federal funds where discrimination in teacher hiring and firing is proved.

Funds Approved For Airport Highway

LAUREL, Miss. (UPI) — State officials have announced the approval of approximately \$400,000 in federal funds for an interstate highway exchange leading to the new Pinebelt Regional Airport.

The Pinebelt Regional Authority and State Highway Department said the funds represent 90 per cent of the cost of the interchange. The yet to be constructed airport will serve the Hattiesburg-Laurel area.



LEATHER AND SHORTS —All in leather, Clodagh Kennedy models in a Montgomery Ward Show. She's one of the members of the Wards Designer Council which confers with Montgomery Wards' fashion buyers twice a year to review sample merchandise, suggest changes, and communicate trends in design, styles, fibers and fabrics.

UPI Telephoto

Where Bird Catching Is More Popular Than Watching

MEXICO CITY (UPI) — Enrique Roman Juarez is a professional birdcatcher, whose weapons are patience and a net. He struggles to eke out a living from the harsh Mexican countryside.

Roman, 45, and an estimated 100 others in this capital catch and sell birds as household pets. Their merchandise ranges from the equivalent of \$1.60 parrots to \$16 song birds.

"Everybody thinks we are getting rich in this business," said Roman, who sat on the curb outside the huge Merced market. About 30 small wooden cages containing his stock were nearby.

"The reality is quite the contrary," he said. "The food costs a lot of money. Some of the birds die. Others escape. All of this is an irreparable loss."

Most of the bird-catchers sell their wares outside the four main government-run markets, which are jammed from sunrise to dusk. A few others trudge from house to house, carrying the cages on their shoulders.

The chirp of caged birds is heard in elegant neighborhoods of Mexico City and in miserable slums. Although no official statistics are available, many Mexicans believe birds are the nation's most popular pets.

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